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## 'Longest way round is the shortest way home:' Escapism in the Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis

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The University of Southern Mississippi

'Longest way round is the shortest way home:'  
Escapism in the Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis

by

Justin R. Noble

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## Abstract

In the early 20th century many ideas existed about the figure of the artist, and what the artist should do. There arose the idea that the artist should be removed from society so that he may more effectively critique and effect it in his art—that the artist should be an escapist figure. The development of the idea of escapism can be seen in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, and Wyndham Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars*. These texts show the development of the artist as escapism, the limits of escapism as an artist, and how the artist might appropriately utilize escapism for his art.

**Key Terms:** James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, the artist, escapism, modernism, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, *Enemy of the Stars*

## Chapter Outline Summary

### Chapter 1: Introduction—pg. 1

- A. Introduction of Issue
- B. Overview of Study

### Chapter 2: An Overview of Escapism in the Texts—pg. 3

- A. Overview of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- B. Overview of *Ulysses*
- C. Overview of *Enemy of the Stars*

### Chapter 3: Methodology—pg. 7

- A. Overview
- B. Selection Criteria
- C. Literary Analysis Strategies

### Chapter 4: *A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man*— pg. 9

### Chapter 5: *Enemy of the Stars*— pg. 28

### Chapter 6: *Ulysses*— pg. 34

### Concluding Remarks—pg. 49

### Works Cited—pg. 51



## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Think you’re escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home.”

-*Ulysses* (360)

In the 20th century many ideas existed about what the artist should do, and how he or she should fit into, and act toward, society, such as: realism, which offered “verisimilitude of detail, a norm of experience, and an objective view of human nature,” and defined the artist as a capturer of the true-to-event, detailed life of everyday people; and modernism, which held the “conviction that the previously sustaining structures of human life, whether social, political, religious, or artistic, had been destroyed or shown up as falsehoods or, at best, arbitrary and fragile human constructions,” and defined the artist as an innovator, one which must bring meaning forth from chaos, one which had to show human experience as it really was, fragmented and fluxing—one which had to “make it new,” as Ezra Pound demanded (Reesman, Krupat 911; Loeffelholz 1184). Among these developments came the idea that the artist should not truly fit into society in any way—the idea of the artist as an escapist (escapism here meaning the desire or encouraging of escaping from one’s own situation or society).

It seems to be natural to the artist, especially when dealing with the movement of modernism, to remove himself from his subject and then begin to capture and critique it through his art (this can be seen to be the case through William Faulkner with *Mississippi* and F. Scott Fitzgerald with *New York*, among others). It seems that this tendency need be studied to some extent, and it appears that an appropriate way to study this artistic phenomenon in literature is through the works of James Joyce—who

put himself into self-imposed exile from Ireland only to write of it in all of his fiction—and Wyndham Lewis—who removed himself intellectually from the society of modern Europe, even the literati, in order to critique it in his art. Though hitherto nearly unexamined for the property of escapism, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, and Lewis' "Enemy of the Stars" can be shown to exhibit tendencies of idea, and the preaching of its merits, in both the behavior of the characters and the stylistic elements of the works themselves.

In this way, the artist as an escapist emerges in these texts as the champion of commentary on his or her world in a previously unpracticed way: the artist becomes a figure that removes himself or herself from the world—a figure that asserts that in order for one to change one's country, circumstances, or world, one must remove oneself from said area, thereby giving a view of it that allows for arguments for betterment and change. The works of Joyce and Lewis, being intensely self-aware literature (or literature that plays heavily upon the fact of its being a work of literature), intentionally place themselves in a position to express what a work of literature should be and do, and how the artist should position himself or herself in relation to society. These texts insist that the artist must remove himself or herself from the world in order to effect change.

## Chapter 2: An Overview of the Escapism in the Texts

In order to understand these works as escapist texts, a study must be undertaken of the different layers of the works—including the stylistic elements, plot devices, and character personalities and functions—to uncover the escapist tendencies that each exhibits. Each work must first be examined separately for these trends; the analyses can then be brought together to show what the works collectively say about how art and the artist must stand in relation to society.

### *I. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

In this novel, the primary escapist interests center around the young protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, and his need to break free of his circumstances: “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (Joyce, 171). Also imperative to understanding Stephen as an escapist figure is his connection to his ancient, legendary counterparts: a parallel is drawn between Stephen and both Daedalus and Icarus. The tale of Daedalus and Icarus is one of escape—they fly from the isle of Crete in the same way that Stephen wishes to fly from the isle of Ireland.

Indeed, Diana Fortuna shows that the outstanding plot device in the novel is the parallel between Stephen’s adolescence and Daedalus’ Labyrinth—that “as correlatives to the myth, Joyce uses winding corridors, caves, gates, circles, nets, divinations, riddles, hidings, mazes, escapes, and finally ascension” (120). This parallel poses Stephen’s very development, in his becoming the artist as a young man, as an act of escape.

## II. *Ulysses*

One of the most essential properties in realizing *Ulysses* as an escapist text is in understanding the novel's relation to Homer's narrative of homeward journey, *The Odyssey*. Each section of *Ulysses* is a modern parallel, retelling, or mockery of a certain adventure in the tale of Odysseus<sup>1</sup>—and as Odysseus' story is primarily one of escape, it is only fitting to read *Ulysses* in this light (Gifford, 12). Monsters become ideas, battles become arguments, the entrapments of Odysseus and his men become the mundanity of everyday life. *The Odyssey* is also a tale of homecoming, however, and this also casts *Ulysses* as a novel about reaching a true home for the artist—staging escape as homecoming.

Crucial here, also, is an understanding of the characterization of the novel. Each of the leading characters in the novel, like Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist*, is presented as a parallel to one or more legendary counterparts. Stephen Dedalus retains his pairing with Daedalus and Icarus, but also takes on the role of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Leopold Bloom, whom the majority of the novel follows, is presented as the Odysseus of the text. Other characters take on personas as challenges, acquaintances, or opponents that Telemachus and Odysseus come into contact with. These correlations make character interactions important on multiple levels: Stephen is set up as Bloom's son, making the relationship that they possess and their interactions with one another significant in an entirely new way. As we are told in the *Wandering Rocks* episode, "There's a touch of the artist about old Bloom"(225).

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<sup>1</sup> As was indicated by Joyce in the two schemas for the text that he produced: the first being sent to Carlo Linati in September 1920; the second was loaned to Valery Larbaud in late 1921 and circulated by Sylvia Beach, somewhat in secret, during the 1920s, and was not published until 1930 in Stuart Gilbert's James Joyce's "Ulysses."

This equates Bloom with Stephen, who is known as “the artist”, and raises further questions about their connection as father/son figures. Both are “exiles who are excluded, or exclude themselves, from their literal homes as well as from the various forms of metaphysical unity those homes represent” (Klein, 68). Bloom and Stephen are escapist figures, and this fact represents their stories, and those of their legendary counterparts, in an escapist light.

### III. *Enemy of the Stars*

Wyndham Lewis’ “Vorticist drama” can be read both as an advocacy of escapist ideals and as a cautionary tale against taking escapism too far. Arghol, the protagonist of the play, the “enemy of the stars” of the title, is the epitome of extreme escapism; he is “a gladiator who has come to fight a ghost, Humanity” (Lewis, 61). Arghol thinks himself the ultimate image of the artist, standing entirely against the stream of societal convention. His complete separation from the world, however, leads only to his own downfall: “Arghol falls prey to self-contradiction by dismissing the text of himself as his opposite” (Klein, 55). He is killed by his “disciple”, Hanp, who wishes to be both separated from the world and active in creating it. At the end of the play, Hanp becomes the new Arghol—the new artist. *Enemy of the Stars* shows, in this way, that the artist must escape from the world, but not try to remove himself or herself entirely; that the artist must both be escapist and activist—be removed from while also working toward the betterment of society.

In the play, Lewis puts forward the “idea of the artist as a ‘mixed type,’ partially immersed in the common life, partially acting as its adversary” (Nickels, 351). Because Arghol is entirely removed from, and fighting against, common society, he can not be

the true artist. Hanp, his disciple, finds the need to play member to society, while simultaneously being posed against it. In this way, the artist becomes an escapist that uses his or her removal from society in order to combat it.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to perform a close reading and in-depth analysis of these texts, I will set up my research into separate sections, focusing on each work separately. After these separate analyses, I will move on to show how the analyses show each text substantiating a claim that connects with the others to form a more complete view of the escapism in art, and the artist as an escapist.

First, in each section, I will analyze the texts for the theme of escapism through the characterization. I will lay out exactly how each character exhibits escapist tendencies and why they need to escape, their hopes for changing their surroundings, and how character relations work to show how the text is calling for the artist to escape. Then, I will move on to show how the plot-devices in that particular text formally complement the theme of escapism.

For *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, I will first perform a close reading that demonstrates the connections between Stephen Dedalus' story and the myth of Daedalus and Icarus, along with the Labyrinth as a plot device in the text. This analysis will show how Stephen's development both as a young man and as an artist is framed in the text as an escape from the bonds that society attempts to place upon him.

For *Ulysses*, I will divide the analysis into the novel's separate sections. I will show how the connection between each section and its corresponding part of *The Odyssey* pushes forth escapist import. As most of the episodes of *The Odyssey* journey chronicle Odysseus' or Telemachus' escape from, or triumph over, one evil or another, the parts of *Ulysses* chronicle Bloom's or Stephen's escape from, or triumph

over, the society or world in which they find themselves. I will also examine the form of the novel, showing how the style of the writing exemplifies the escape from the mundanity of everyday life.

For *Enemy of the Stars*, I will analyze how the battle between Arghol and Hanp, and Hanp's desire to immerse himself partially in the world, emphasizes the need of the artist to be both enemy and member of society. The reading of this play as a battle of one type of artist against another frames the text as a statement about which type of artist is the more powerful in his art. Through the analysis of Arghol's character, and the chaotic form and style of the work, I will show how the play is working as a cautionary tale against the artist removing himself or herself entirely from society, as partial immersion is what allows the artist to create moving and powerful art.

I will then show how each of these texts—*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as an argument concerning the artist's development in moving away from society; *Ulysses* as a statement about the artist's need to escape from the bonds of the monotony of everyday life and society's norms; and *Enemy of the Stars* as an argument for the artist's need to remain partly immersed in collective life, so that the art that he or she produces does not become weak and ineffectual— is working together to provide a more complete argument about the artist's role as an escapist. I will attempt to uncover how each of the texts show, through characterization and plot devices, that art, and the artist, should aim to be distanced enough from society that they can effect change through social critique.

## **Chapter 4: The Development of the Artist into Escapism—*A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man***

To better understand the importance of the idea of escapism for the figure of the artist, it is crucial to apprehend just how and why this tendency arises in the artist. A study of a text that deals with the development of an artist seems the appropriate place to begin a search for the connection between escapism and the artist. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as it explores the development and maturation of an artist, provides an excellent opportunity to observe the artist's development as an escapist, and why this development is necessary.

### **Stephen as a Parallel to Daedalus and Icarus**

*“Et ignotas animus dimittit in artes.”* This is the epigraph that precedes the first chapter of the *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It translates roughly to: “And he put his mind to unknown arts.” Perhaps more important than the translation, however, is the text from which it comes: the line appears in Book VIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in the section about Daedalus and the tragic demise of his son Icarus. Thus, before the novel even begins, Stephen's story becomes entangled with that of Daedalus and Icarus.

Much of the imagery and many references throughout *Portrait* link Stephen's story with the mythology of the artificer and his son. During Stephen's time at Clongowes, a parallel is set up between the school and the tower in which Daedalus and Icarus are imprisoned, so that Daedalus' knowledge of his creation for the king of

Crete, the Labyrinth, can be kept from reaching the public. The first strong instance of this occurs when Stephen is closed up in the infirmary: "He looked at the window and saw that the daylight had grown weaker. There would be cloudy grey light over the playgrounds. There was no noise on the playgrounds. The class must be doing the themes or perhaps Father Arnall was reading a legend out of the book" (*Portrait*, 21). The atmosphere described here is very much like a prison: the grey coloring of the scene; the 'playgrounds' recalling the recreation yard; and the prisoner, Stephen, staring wistfully out of the window. Stephen's imprisonment recalls that of Daedalus and Icarus. Moreover, Stephen notices how "the fire rose and fell on the wall. It was like waves" (*Portrait*, 21). This imagery recalls the waves of the ocean outside of Daedalus' and Icarus' tower. The father and son, locked away in their tower on the shore of Crete, would constantly see the rise and fall of the waves much in the same way that Stephen observes the rise and fall of the light from the fire on the wall.

Later, when Stephen is having Christmas dinner with his family, Mr Casey laments his fallen leader: "Poor Parnell! he cried loudly. My dead king" (*Portrait*, 33). This reference to Parnell as a "king" gives rise to interesting implications. Stephen's father, Mr Dedalus, was also in service to Parnell; thus, like Icarus' father, Daedalus, was in service to King Minos, so Stephen's father now serves his king and is trapped within the society which he hoped to serve. When the Dedalus's are forced to move to Dublin because of financial hardship, it is stated: "The sudden flight from the comfort and revery of Blackrock, the passage through the gloomy foggy city . . . made his heart heavy" (*Portrait*, 55). The idea of the move as a "sudden flight" strongly recalls the flight that Daedalus and Icarus must take to escape from their tower. Even the name of the

town from which they are leaving is perfectly suited to the reference: the shores of Crete are dark and rocky—they are ‘black rock.’

When Stephen is sitting in a breakfast room listening to an old woman talk and make tea, the imagery used to describe his thoughts works to equate him with Daedalus: “He sat listening to the words and following the ways of adventure that lay open in the coals, arches and vaults and winding galleries and jagged caverns” (*Portrait*, 56). Stephen creates his own Labyrinth within his mind; he uses his imagination—words, concepts, ideas—to forge the winding caverns, passageways, and galleries. Further still, Stephen’s development as an artist equates him with Daedalus: like the mythological inventor, Stephen is forging artifice, only he is doing so by the use of words and ideas rather than physical objects and tools.

Later, when Stephen is recalling his time in the infirmary at Clongowes, and his fancies of dying there, he contemplates nonexistence: “He had not died but he had faded out like a film in the sun. He had been lost or had wandered out of existence for he no longer existed. How strange to think of him passing out of existence in such a way, not by death but by fading out in the sun or by being lost and forgotten somewhere in the universe!” (*Portrait*, 78). The idea of “fading out in the sun” is strongly reminiscent of Icarus’ demise. Icarus flies too close to the sun and his wings burn up and fall apart—fading out of sight and then plunging into the ocean below. Stephen thus equates himself with Icarus, imagining his demise to be like that of the son of Daedalus.

Stephen’s fleeing from social and religious orders also aligns his story with that of Daedalus:

The university! So he had passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who had stood as guardians of his boyhood and had sought to keep him among them that he might be subject to them and serve their ends. Pride after satisfaction uplifted him like long slow waves. The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path: and now it beckoned to him once more and a new adventure was about to be opened to him (*Portrait*, 139).

Stephen's acceptance into the university marks his first true triumph in having escaped the confines of his childhood. Just as Daedalus and Icarus fled from the power structures which entangled them (namely that of King Minos) , he has fled from the structures—the church and the state— which held him, and is in flight toward true freedom. Stephen is caught up in the ecstasy of flight, and sees himself on the way to his artistic destiny as well.

Joyce also uses the conglomeration of Greek mythology and the Christian didacticism by which Stephen is surrounded in order to connect his story with that of Daedalus and Icarus. During the retreat of Francis Xavier, the priest preaches to Stephen about the folly of Satan: “Lucifer, we are told, was a son of the morning, a radiant and mighty angel; yet he fell . . . What his sin was we cannot say. Theologians consider that it was the sin of pride, the sinful thought conceived in an instant: *non serviam: I will not serve*” (*Portrait*, 99). Later, in a conversation with Cranly, Stephen explains why he refuses to take communion: “I will not serve, answered Stephen.’ ‘That remark was made before, Cranly said calmly” (*Portrait*, 201). Stephen, through equating himself with Lucifer by insistence upon not serving, effectively, if

unconsciously, also equates himself with Icarus. The image of Lucifer, a winged—angelic—figure falling from the sky after attempting too high a height (that of God’s place), is an image that closely parallels that of Icarus, falling from the sky after attempting to fly at too high an altitude—bringing a dark significance to the scene in which Stephen, standing by the ocean, hears yelled out after his fantasies of flight, “O, Cripes, I’m drowned!” (*Portrait*, 142).

From the very beginning of the novel, the text is structured to replicate the rhythm of flight. At first, rhythm is frenzied and sporadic, recalling the first flapping of the wings, the preparation to take to the air: “To remember that and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot” (*Portrait*, 9); “He leaned his elbows on the table and shut and opened the flaps of his ears . . . It made a roar like a train at night . . . He closed his eyes and the train went on, roaring and then stopping; roaring again, stopping. It was nice to hear it roar and stop and then roar out of the tunnel again and then stop” (*Portrait*, 10). This relatively slow and inconsistent rhythm recalls the idea of a creature first learning to use its wings—testing for itself its ability to fly. Following this, however, the rhythm begins to pick up speed, the wings are flapped faster and Stephen begins to take flight:

The fellows cheered . . . Cheer after cheer after cheer. Through Clane they drove, cheering and cheered . . . The gaurds went to and fro opening closing, locking, unlocking the doors . . . and their keys made a quick music: click, click: click, click . . . The telegraph poles were passing,

passing. The train went on and on. It knew . . . There were holly and ivy round the pierglass and holly and ivy, green and red, twined round the chandeliers. There were red holly and green ivy round the old portraits on the walls. Holly and ivy for him and for Christmas (*Portrait*, 16).

This furious burst of rhythm takes Stephen finally into the air, allowing him to truly use his wings for the first time. After this initial take to flight, the rhythm becomes more sporadic, recalling the actions of a creature already in flight—only needing to flap its wings on occasion to keep itself aloft: “And from here and from there came the sounds of the cricketbats through the soft grey air. They said: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain slowly falling in the brimming bowl” (*Portrait*, 34); “The air was very silent and you could hear the cricketbats but more slowly than before: pick, pock” (*Portrait*, 36); “[H]e made [the words] to fit the insistent rhyhtm of the train; and silently, at intervals of four seconds, the telegraphpoles held the galloping notes of the music between punctual bars” (*Portrait*, 73); “The indices appearing and disappearing were eyes opening and closing; the eyes opening and closing were stars being born and being quenched. The vast cycle of starry life bore his weary mind outward to its verge and inward to its centre, a distant music accompanying him outward and inward” (*Portrait*, 86). After the latter example, this sort of rhythm disappears from the novel—Stephen having fully achieved flight, no longer needing to flap his wings to maintain flight or increase his altitude: he can now use the currents at his disposal—those of his assembled philosophies and artistic ideas—in order to continue rising.

The macrostructure of the novel also works to recall flight pattern. Each of the five sections of the novel are divided into the different structures that Stephen must

grapple with: the fellowship of his peers, sexual attraction, religion, education and intellect, and art. The first section, fellowship, begins with Stephen unremarkable among his peers, and seemingly not respected. By the closing of this section, however, Stephen has gained glory among his peers for standing up to Father Dolan: “They made a cradle of their locked hands and hoisted him up among them and carried him along till he struggled to get free” (*Portrait*, 49). Stephen manages to work his way up from disrespect among his fellow classmates to having them lift him above themselves. The next section finds Stephen low once again, faced with the issue of sexual attraction. The section opens with Stephen pining after a seemingly unattainable love or lust, but ends with him making love for the first time: “He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips . . . and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour” (*Portrait*, 85). Stephen seems to have succeeded in satisfying his need—to have overcome the problem of sexual attraction. Section III opens with Stephen downtrodden once again—overcome by his perversions and coming to believe that he is hell-bound. By the end of the section, however, he has confessed and feels himself completely at peace with God: “Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness! It was true. It was not a dream from which he would wake. The past was past . . . The ciborium had come to him” (*Portrait*, 123). Section IV finds Stephen growing unhappy with the lifestyle that he has chosen, and faced with a new obstacle, that of education and intellect. He has become disillusioned with the idea of the priesthood, and is perplexed about what route his life should take. By the end of the section, however, Stephen is once again triumphant: he

is entering the university and has come to terms with the destiny that he wishes for himself—that of a scholar. Once again, though, as the pattern of the novel has previously established, the beginning of the fifth and final section opens on Stephen downcast. He is regularly missing his classes at the university—bored with the classes to which he does show up; he struggles to define himself as an artist and intellectual. By the close of the novel, nevertheless, Stephen has overcome: he has written his first poem in a flash of artistic inspiration (*Are you not weary of ardent ways?*), and has decided to leave Ireland to seek out his destiny: “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race . . . Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead” (*Portrait*, 213). Thus, the novel ends in a final rise of triumph for Stephen. This consistent pattern of rises and falls throughout *Portrait* mimics the pattern of a creature in flight. Like a bird swooping down and then regaining altitude, Stephen rises and falls throughout the novel, gaining a higher altitude after each fall. The ending of the novel leaves one with the suspicion that Stephen is destined ultimately to fall, to fail, as the pattern throughout has indicated—which would, along with Stephen’s addressing Daedalus as a father, firmly identify him with Icarus.

Also pushing forth the idea of flight throughout the novel is Stephen’s association with birds—most notably his friend, Heron:

Stephen shook his head and smiled in his rival’s flushed and mobile face, beaked like a bird’s. He had often thought it strange that Vincent Heron had a bird’s face as well as a bird’s name. A shock of pale hair lay on the forehead like a ruffled crest: the forehead was narrow and bony and a thin

hooked nose stood out between the close-set prominent eyes which were light and inexpressive. The rivals were school friends . . . Stephen and Heron had been during the year the virtual heads of the school. It was they who went up to the rector together to ask for a free day or to get a fellow off (*Portrait*, 64).

It is emphasized that the two schoolboys are rivals, and quite clearly equals. When the novel first introduces us to Heron, Stephen is flying side by side with him. The two are above all of their fellow classmates, but neither seems to have any height over the other. Through a flashback of Stephen's, though, one learns that this was not initially the standing between Stephen and Heron. Heron was previously situated above Stephen in power, having two other schoolmates help him to beat and torment Stephen simply because of a disagreement on who might be the greatest poet. What is implied, then, is that Stephen, though initially below Heron, has risen to the point that he is equal to him by this point in the novel: he is flying side by side with the birds. Eventually, however, even this height does not appear to be enough for Stephen: just as Stephen is beginning his rise in the world of religion in section III, Vincent Heron is mentioned for the last time in the novel: "He leaned back weakly in his desk. He had not died. God had spared him still. He was still in the familiar world of the school. Mr Tate and Vincent Heron stood at the window, talking, jesting, gazing out at the bleak rain, moving their heads" (*Portrait*, 105). Heron's conspicuous disappearance from the novel appears to indicate that Stephen has left him behind, has risen above him. Stephen is no longer on level with Heron, they are no longer rivals; Stephen is flying above Heron's height, above the height of birds.

Stephen's connection with Daedalus and Icarus is an all too important one in light of the theme of escapism. As the story of Daedalus and Icarus is ultimately a story of escape—an escape from oppressive power structures and inability to freely create—it can shed much light on Stephen's story in the novel. Stephen is essentially a young man trapped—trapped by politics, by religion, by blood, by nationality—and, like Daedalus, he feels the need to use whatever tools are at his disposal in order to free himself: “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (*Portrait*, 171). What is interesting about this declaration is the ambiguity of the word ‘by.’ It could be that Stephen means that he wishes to fly ‘around’ the nets of nationality, language, and religion; but he could also be saying that he will fly ‘through the use of’ these nets. Like Daedalus, ultimately it is the ways by which Stephen is trapped that become his tools of escape. Daedalus must use his tools and materials of architecture and artifice—the things he used to construct the Labyrinth, the project that ultimately caused him to be locked away by King Minos—in order to construct a method of escape. Stephen, likewise, must transmute his nationality, language, and religion—those nets which have been flung at him to hold him down—into an art that will facilitate his escape.

Establishing the connection between the story of Stephen and that of Daedalus and Icarus also works to introduce the image of the Labyrinth into the novel. Through this lens, Stephen might also be seen to embody Theseus—the young hero, thrown against his will into a structure meant to feed from his livelihood. Just as Theseus is

thrown into the Labyrinth so that he can expend his cleverness and strengths, and so that the Minotaur may feed on his youth and vitality—Stephen is thrown into the Labyrinth that is Ireland, whose power structures are designed to drain Stephen through his struggle against the limitations of nationality, language, and religion, and force him into complacency and entrapment through feeding on his youth and vitality. Art is to become Stephen's Ariadne, the love that will allow him to escape the Labyrinth of his development and Ireland's intertwined power structures. If one looks for what might be the counterpart of Ariadne's thread in Stephen's story—the connective thread which runs throughout the novel, that leads Stephen through his various stages of development—the obvious idea is that of language. Language is the way by which Stephen orients himself through his development. It begins as a fascination with words and their various meanings: "He kept his hands in the sidepockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt around his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt . . . That was not a nice expression" (*Portrait*, 7). This childlike preoccupation then evolves into attempts by Stephen to associate words and phrases with meaning in his own life: "Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but protestants could not understand it and made fun of it" (*Portrait*, 35). This in turn becomes an understanding of how the language use of others affects how he uses language: "On the first line of the page appeared the title of the verses he was trying to write: To E— C—. He knew it was right to begin so for he had seen similar titles in the collected poems of Lord Byron" (*Portrait*, 58). This eventually becomes a fascination with the essence of words and their etymology: "The word now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn

from the mottled tusks of elephants. *Ivory, ivoire, avorio, eber*" (*Portrait*, 150).

Language then finally becomes the means by which Stephen creates his art: "Like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain" (*Portrait*, 188). Language, like Ariadne's string for Theseus, is the thread that allows Stephen to work his way through the Labyrinth of his development.

Ultimately, the connection between Stephen's story and these Ancient Greek myths provides the novel with escapist significance. The story of Daedalus and Icarus is, at its roots, a story of escaping from oppression—from the inability to create freely what the artificer wished to create; and it is through this power of creation that Daedalus and Icarus were given the power to escape. Escape is ultimately the purpose of any story in which the Labyrinth is concerned. Stephen's very development as an artist, then, must be considered an act of escape. Art must be considered, in this light, as a way of distancing oneself from the society and power structures which surround one: as a way of escaping from one's own world.

### **Society as a System Which Must Be Escaped**

From the beginning of the novel, it becomes apparent that Stephen finds himself in a system which he needs to escape lest it stifle his art. When Mr. Dedalus, Mr. Casey, and Dante are arguing over Christmas dinner, it is shown that the forces which pervade Stephen's life all come together to entrap him: "*I'll pay you your dues, father, when you cease turning the house of God into a pollingbooth.*" . . . "We go to the house of God, Mr

Casey said, in all humility to pray to our Maker and not to hear election addresses.’ ‘It is religion, Dante said again. They are right. They must direct their flocks’” (*Portrait*, 25). Dante’s insistence that the structure of politics *is* religion brings forth the idea of these varying structures intertwining to trap Stephen. The aura projected by these entwined structures is much like that of a prison: “Well, it is perfectly dreadful to say that not even for one day in the year, said Mrs Dedalus, can we be free from these dreadful disputes!” (*Portrait*, 28). There are no days in which the power structures are not working to entrap people—there is no ‘parole’. These constructs must keep their prisoners continually fighting *within* them; for as long as the people are arguing and struggling against one another within the systems, they cannot escape from them or fight against them. Early on in the novel, Stephen begins to realize, however unconsciously, this truth, and his need to remove himself from it: “No, it was best to hide out of the way because when you were small and young you could often escape that way” (*Portrait*, 46). Though Stephen cannot quite formulate it for himself, he has begun to discover that these systems cannot be fought from within them, and that he must remove himself from them. He has also not yet developed the understanding that once he has escaped these power structures, he might then begin to fight against them, but that understanding can only develop from this initial need to remove himself.

As this idea develops within Stephen, he begins to find pleasure in distancing himself from the societal structures which surround him: “He chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it and testing its mortifying flavour in secret” (*Portrait*, 56). Stephen realizes that distancing himself from a specific subject gives him a wider range of understanding for it; he can view the subject on all of its levels—

observe it in a way that is impossible from within the midst of it. This need only continues to accelerate within Stephen, becoming the only true way in which he enjoys himself: “He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades” (*Portrait*, 70). Stephen thus develops the understanding that it is only in a removal from the politico-religious structures and society which surround him that his creative impulses may thrive.

It is for this reason that service within the Church first appeals to Stephen. He is paradoxically led to believe that the priesthood is a removal from the structures of society, or, as the priest in the chapel declares it, a ‘retreat’:

Now what is the meaning of this word *retreat* and why is it allowed on all hands to be a most salutary practice for all who desire to lead before God and in the eyes of men a truly christian life? A retreat, my dear boys, signifies a withdrawal for a while from the cares of our life, the cares of this workaday world, in order to examine the state of our conscience, to reflect on the mysteries of holy religion and to understand better why we are here in this world (*Portrait*, 92).

Stephen thus sees the church as an organization which will allow him to escape from the world in which he lives so that he may gain a greater understanding of that world. He perceives the Church as a non-structure, separate from the power structures of the society by which he is bound. In this very sermon, however, it is foreshadowed that this is not the case: “The preacher began to speak in a quiet friendly tone. His face was kind and he joined gently the fingers of each hand, forming a frail cage by the union of

their tips" (*Portrait*, 107). The imagery here hints at the fact that the priesthood will only be an extension of the prison for Stephen: he will find no escape in it from the entrapment that he faces. At the time, Stephen is not aware of this; he plans to join the Church, hoping that the acts of the priesthood will provide him with what he seeks "by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it" (*Portrait*, 133). He blindly hopes that the Church presents to him a place that will allow him to inhabit a position in which he will be both removed from society and able to affect it. It is not until Stephen is well on his way to joining the priesthood that he begins to come to terms with the fact that the Church will not afford him this space:

Images of the outbursts of trivial anger which he had often noted among his masters, their twitching mouths, closeshut lips and flushed cheeks, recurred to his memory, discouraging him, for all his practice of humility, by the comparison. To merge his life in the common tide of other lives was harder for him than any fasting or prayer and it was his constant failure to do this to his own satisfaction which caused in his soul at last a sensation of spiritual dryness together with a growth of doubts and scruples (*Portrait*, 127-128).

He has begun to realize that the Church is not the escape for which he is searching. Here he must still conform, must still integrate instead of remove himself. The priesthood thus loses its luster for Stephen. It is not the non-structure that he had hoped it presented; it is in fact only an extension of the power structures which he hopes to escape. After Stephen is given the official invitation to join the priesthood, he finally comes fully to terms with this: "He saw himself sitting at dinner with community of

a college. What, then, had become of that deeprooted shyness of his which had made him loth to eat or drink under a strange roof? What had come of the pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as a being apart in every order?" (*Portrait*, 136). Stephen realizes that the Church is an order just like that of politics and nationality, and that he must separate himself from it in the same way that he feels he must separate himself from the other power structures which dominate the world around him: "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (*Portrait*, 136). Stephen is finally able to articulate the need that he feels to be removed. He understands that he must be apart from society and still retain his ability to interact and effect change within it. Belonging to any structure will not give him the place which he wishes to inhabit, but to remove himself entirely from the flow of life or existence will rob him of the ability to learn wisdom or experience what the world has to offer.

### **The Artist as Escapist**

Stephen now understands that in order for him to truly understand the world or society in which he lives—to understand life—he must distance himself from the orders and structures of that world: "He was alone. He was unheeded, happy and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and willful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the seaharvest of shells and tangle and veiled

grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air” (*Portrait*, 144). Through the act of removing himself, Stephen comes closer to understanding the world around him. He finds that it is through being detached from the events of society that he comes closer to the truth of life, and his creative personality revels in this. Stephen then comes to find that he also finds joy in his ability to be separated amongst others: “But, when this brief pride of silence upheld him no longer, he was glad to find himself still in the midst of common lives, passing on his way amid the squalor and noise and sloth of the city fearlessly and with a light heart” (*Portrait*, 148). Stephen realizes that he can understand better the lives of those around him when separated from them, only observing what occurs around him.

It is from this understanding that Stephen comes to apprehend himself as an artist. He realizes that his previous revelations about his personality are due to his identity as an artist:

The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak. The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails (*Portrait*, 181).

Stephen sees that, as an artist, he must remove himself from society so that he may better understand it. He must absorb the workings of the world from a distance in order

to properly conceive of them and the rework them into art. It is only through this separation that he can effectively capture and critique society in his art. Stephen comes finally to understand that his identity as an artist is one necessarily removed from society.

Put differently, Stephen begins to understand that the type of the artist is one that essentially must work from a separated standpoint. He exemplifies this in his references to the seraphim within his poetry: “*Are you not weary of ardent ways, / Lure of the fallen seraphim? / Tell no more of enchanted days*” (*Portrait*, 183). Stephen’s equating himself with the seraphim within his art is important in his own conception of himself as an artist. The seraphim hold an intriguing place within the mythology of Christianity: they are the mediators between God and man, and they are ultimately the enlighteners—they fill man with ardor and fire. Stephen sees his place as an artist as a mediator of life; he must remain removed from the flow of life, but also take it in and enlighten others with the truth of the life that he observes.

### **The Development of the Artist as an Act of Escape**

Ultimately, the novel is a *kunsterroman*: it is the story of Stephen’s realizing himself as an artist—developing from a confused young boy to a determined artist. Thus, the importance in the text of Stephen’s recognizing his need to remove himself from the society in which he lives is essentially connected to his growth as an artist. As his development culminates, Stephen comes to the conclusion, “[T]he shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead” (*Portrait*, 211). Tara being the seat of the ancient Irish kings,

and Holyhead being the Welsh port where ships coming *from* Ireland would land, what Stephen is asserting is that the the best way to reach the heart of Ireland is by leaving—the best way to come to the heart, the truth, of life is to remove oneself from it. This is Stephen's final development point, realizing fully that he must remove himself from society in order to effectively capture and critique it in his art. Thus, the development of the artist is shown within the novel to be, in itself, an act of escape.

## Chapter 5: The Limits of Escapism for the Artist—*Enemy of the Stars*

If *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* demonstrates that escapist tendencies are essentially connected with the identity of the artist, then it becomes important to understand just what sort of escapism is to be sought by an artist. It has been shown that it is important for the artist to remove himself from his subject in order to gain perspective on and properly critique it, but it remains to be seen just what extent of removal is to be sought by an artist. Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist drama, *Enemy of the Stars*, gives an answer to this question.

In this work, we are given a view of the "artist" when he has separated himself entirely from society and the world around him—a sort of *unrestricted* escapism. The drama that arises out of this exaggerated form of escapism is one of impotence and frustration. The characters introduced as artists find themselves incapable of truly engaging with the "subject" of their art. *Enemy of the Stars*, then, presents us with what amounts to a cautionary tale about the impossibilities of an artist's separating himself entirely from society.

Arghol has left the world of his fellow humans and has isolated himself with no intention of ever again interacting with others. He wishes to, in a way, cleanse himself of any outside influences; the only human interaction he maintains is with his disciple, Hanp, whom he hopes to make a mere reflection of himself. Arghol fancies himself "a gladiator who has come to fight a ghost, Humanity" (*Enemy*, 61). Thus, Arghol's subject as an artist is humanity itself: he wishes to fight it—to change it. He has, however,

separated himself entirely from humanity. What happens in the case of Arghol is that this full disengaging from the outside world leads to an essential disconnect between the artist and his subject; he is left ineffective, unable to effect any change or truly manipulate his subject in any way: “The canal ran in one direction, his blood, weakly, in the opposite” (*Enemy*, 64). Arghol wishes to work in direct opposition to society and humanity, but his complete separation from these things has left him ineffective. He is more acted upon than acting: “But the violences of all things had left him so far intact” (*Enemy*, 64).

Arghol’s refusal to act upon his subject—or his enemy—in any way makes his art something impotent and ridiculous. The entirety of Arghol’s character seems to be built around this ridiculousness and inability to act. Even his speech, which would seem to be the method of his art, continually falls flat: “Arghol’s voice had no modulation’s of argument. Weak now, it handled words numbly, like tired compositor” (*Enemy*, 66). Arghol’s very name speaks to this aspect of his character. The name “Arghol” seems to be an altered spelling of *argal*, a corruption of the Latin *ergo* used by the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* in his nonsense argument about death and burial; this would seem, therefore, to bring with it a connotation of unsound reasoning. The essence of Arghol’s character, then, seems to be rooted in a fundamentally unsound idea: he defines himself as an “enemy” of humanity and society, but, through his refusal to act upon it in any way (“I am too vain to do harm, too superb ever to lift a finger when harmed”), he is entirely incapable of performing that upon which the title of enemy insists (*Enemy*, 67).

Arghol believes that he ensures the strength of his ego by never venturing into the outside world—never interacting with it in any way: “I must live, like a tree, where I

grow. An inch to left or right would be too much . . . A visionary tree, not migratory: visions from within" (*Enemy*, 68). Arghol has a firm belief that he must remain rooted exactly where he is—remain rooted within himself; to gain perspective or understanding from any other source would be destructive in his view. This conception of the ego, though, is contradictory to Arghol's self-perceived place as the thinker or the artist. Arghol himself seems to have some sort of notion as to this contradiction, if only subconsciously: "A man with headache lies in deliberate leaden inanimation. He isolates his body, floods it with phlegm, sucks numbness up to his brain" (*Enemy*, 68). Arghol, here, makes a statement about the life that he has set up for himself. He is intentionally idle, refusing ever to act. This inactivity leads to a stagnation in his life—contaminates his ego—dulling his brain and leaving all of his intentions dulled or jumbled. The man's need for numbness in Arghol's statement is seemingly caused by his headache, but the cause of the headache itself may shed more light on the statement. A headache seems to be symptomatic of an excess of pressure. Arghol has pressure within him—the need to create as an artist—and tries to numb this pressure by isolation. What is caused by this, however, is a vicious cycle: the pressure builds up through Arghol's refusal to act, and he tries to remedy this by further removing himself from the venues in which he might be able to act. The totality of Arghol's escapism robs him of the ability to create—the ability to be an artist.

What Arghol lacks is any creation or action to effect change in the world around him. When Arghol is expounding upon his philosophy, his disciple, Hanp, interjects with this to say about him: "Your thought is buried in yourself" (*Enemy*, 70). All of what might make Arghol the artist is locked within himself, becoming stagnant. Arghol has

made the mistake that Lewis warns against in “Code of the Herdsman”: “*Never* fall into the vulgarity of being or assuming yourself to be one ego . . . Leave your front door one day as B.: the next march down the street as E. A variety of clothes, hats, especially, are of help in this wider dramatization of yourself” (“Herdsman,” 32). Arghol has locked his ego away, believing that this will create a stronger will for him. He expresses nothing but disdain for interacting with the crowd: “Men have a loathsome deformity called Self; affliction got through indiscriminate rubbing against their fellows : Social excrescence” (*Enemy*, 71). In order to inhabit the type of the artist, however, Arghol needs to recognize his self as multiple egos; he needs to build the self of the artist out of the variety of selves that can be found within the crowd in order to fashion thoughts or arts from the materials with which they provide him. Joel Nickels provides a useful analysis of Lewis’s understanding of the artist as a mixed-type:

Lewis recommends that one venture among the “herd” of popular humanity in search of these pseudo-selves. One must “borrow from all sides mannerisms of callings or classes” and “contradict [oneself], in order to live.” And according to Lewis, “you must remain broken up” in order to fulfill this imperative (Nickels 348).

This is what Arghol wants: a “broken up” ego. He cannot inhabit the the liminal role of the artist; he must be above and outside of the crowd of everyday life, but, at the same time, be involved enough in his subject in order to gather the materials that he needs in order to properly critique it: “Lewis constructs models of the artist as a ‘shamanized man,’ as an ‘ideal journalist,’ as an ‘enemy of life’ and as a cunning ‘fox’ who feigns impersonality” (Nickels 350).

Because of Arghol's inability to inhabit this liminal role, he becomes unable to affect anything outside of himself; he is incapable of any potent action. This is evidenced in the fight between Arghol and Hanp: "Arghol did not hit hard. Like something inanimate, only striking as rebound and as attacked" (*Enemy*, 75). Not only are all of Arghol's actions weak and ineffective—any action that he does take is entirely reactionary, not at all of his own creation. Arghol cannot act; he cannot create of his own will. His "thought"—his art—is trapped within himself. He has taken the escapism that is inherent to the artist's nature to a degree that causes it to collapse upon itself.

The absolute escapism—the retreat into the self—that Arghol stands for serves to make only inward action feasible: it does not allow for actions that effect the artist's surroundings, only actions that effect the artist himself. Hanp, through his apprenticeship to Arghol, falls into this trap, himself. After the fight, Hanp decides to kill the still sleeping Arghol, but he finds the action more difficult than he might have imagined: "He took deep breaths : his eyes almost closed. He opened one roughly with two fingers, the knife held stiffly at arms length. He could hardly help plunging it in himself, the nearest flesh to him" (*Enemy*, 84). Hanp has already developed the capacity for locking all of his action within himself: he has trouble even attempting to act on anything outside of himself. The time that Hanp has spent as Arghol's apprentice has left him nearly as impotent as Arghol. However, Hanp believes that through killing Arghol, he can free himself for a true life of action. He finds, however, that he is gravely mistaken when leaving the hut: "Near the gate of the yard he found an idle figure. It was his master. He ground his teeth almost in this man's face, with an aggressive and furious movement towards him. The face looked shy and pleased, but civil, like a

mysterious domestic" (*Enemy*, 85). Hanp realizes that he has not truly performed any action. He may have acted, but the act was pure retaliation—he performs what the instinct of nature requires of him. It is not the act of a creative force—not the act of a free artist. Hanp confirms this inability to act any way but inwardly in the most extreme way open to him: "He sprang from the bridge clumsily, too unhappy for instinctive science, and sank like lead, his heart a sagging weight of stagnant hatred" (*Enemy*, 85). Hanp, in his desperation, performs the greatest of actions that a person can perform on himself; he commits suicide. Ultimately, though, his act is merely destructive, and he is not able to effect any change in anything or anyone but himself.

What Lewis provides us with, then, in *Enemy of the Stars* is a portrait of what the artist might become if he removes himself too entirely from the subject that he wishes to capture and critique in his art. The artist becomes impotent to effect change in his subject; he does not have the requisite materials—the experiences of the subject on which he is working—he needs from which to create art. Lewis realizes that the artist can only be "just, moderate and beneficent if you are not involved in what you are called to act upon—if you are withdrawn from it and 'not interested in it'" ("PNS," 202). Knowing this, however, he also makes it evident that an artist cannot be wholly separated from his subject. The artist must model himself on the character of Socrates, who, as Nickels points out, "represents a condition of doubleness: he is open to changing collective impulses, but retains a principle of detached formal agency that allows him to evaluate and organize these impulses" (Nickels 354). The artist is an escapist, but it is through his escaping that he is able to synthesize the materials that he gathers from everyday life into his art.

## Chapter 6: The Artist as Balanced Escapist—*Ulysses*

With *Enemy of the Stars* showing us what the artist must not take escapism to the extreme, removing himself entirely from the subject of his art, it becomes expedient to see how an artist might successfully appropriate escapism for his art. The artist must be removed from the subject of his art in order to properly critique it, but he must also be partially immersed in the subject as well, in order to gather the materials for use in his art. James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*, demonstrates the artist's inhabitation of this role.

### The Lotus Eaters

Throughout *Ulysses*, the Island of Ireland takes on the role of many of the islands and regions discussed within *The Odyssey*, just as the characters in the novel take on the roles of their counterpart characters. Ireland, Dublin specifically, is the place from which Odysseus (Bloom) must escape (it is Calypso's island), it is the many places he finds and must escape from on his journey home, and it is the place to which he hopes to return (it is Ithaca). As Stephen asserts in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, "the shortest way to Tara was via Holyhead" (the best way to reach home in Ireland, to find the heart of Ireland, to discover the seat of the Ancient Irish Kings, is to escape from the place through a port with ships headed elsewhere).

Within this specific episode of *Ulysses*, Ireland becomes the Isle of the Lotus Eaters. Early in the chapter, Bloom daydreams about the origin lands of Ceylon tea:

The far east. Lovely spot it must be: the garden of the world, big lazy leaves to float about on, cactuses, flowery meads, snaky lianas they call them. Wonder is it like that. Those Cinghalese lobbing around in the sun, in dolce far niente. Not doing hand's turn all day. Sleep six months out of twelve. Too hot to quarrel. Influence of the climate. Lethargy. Flowers of idleness. The air feeds most. Azotes. Hothouse in Botanic gardens.

Sensitive plants. Waterlilies. Petals too tired to. Sleeping sickness in the air. Walk on roseleaves (*Ulysses*, 69).

In this dreamy musing is foreshadowed what Bloom will recognize throughout the episode: Dublin is the Isle of the Lotus Eaters. The people exist within a daze, hypnotized into sleepy contentment by the things upon which they feed: government, small talk, career, family, religion, alcohol, medicine, etc.

When Bloom sees the soldiers on parade through the streets of Dublin, he makes internal commentary on the scene before him: “Maud Gonne’s letter about taking them off O’Connell street at night: disgrace to our Irish capital. Griffith’s paper is on the same tack now: an army rotten with venereal disease: overseas or halfseasover empire. Half baked they look: hypnotised like. Eyes front” (*Ulysses*, 70). The military, the government, nationalism in general is simply just another piece of the lotus—a way in which the people are hypnotized into contentment on their island. It is good to serve and support one’s country—thus making one seemingly feel content—and so people are “happy” to remain within their conditions and live for the continuance of those conditions.

Bloom sees more of this way of life upon reading the newspaper which he carries: "He unrolled the newspaper baton idly and read idly: *What is home without / Plumtree's Potted Meat? / Incomplete. / With it an abode of bliss*" (*Ulysses*, 72).

This bit is most obviously connected to the flowery subject of this chapter by the plant named company, "Plumtree." The advertisement itself becomes a lotus; within the modern and increasingly consumerist world what is taken in (eaten, consumed) by the populace is progressively more like the advertisement shown here. Even the way in which Bloom reads the ad suggests that it is a variant of the lotus: everything is done "idly"—no sense of energy or direction in the action. The advertisement itself also shows this sense of happy hypnotism prevalent in society: "Plumtree's" allows for an "abode of bliss." This is the case for much of the city that Bloom observes in this section.

The next instance we get of this is in Bloom's observance of the horses as he passes the cabman's shelter:

He came nearer and heard a crunching of gilded oats, the gently champing teeth. Their full buck eyes regarded him as he went by, amid the sweet oaten reek of horsepiss. Their Eldorado. Poor jugginses! Damn all they know or care about anything with their long noses stuck in nosebags. Too full for words. Still they get their feed all right and their doss. Gelded too: a stump of black guttapercha wagging limp between their haunches. Might be happy all the same that way. Good poor brutes they look. Still their neigh can be very irritating (*Ulysses*, 74).

The distinction between the horses and the cabmen that drive them becomes blurred in Bloom's description. Bloom realizes that this is the pinnacle of their existence—their golden city. Whatever their hopes or cares they might have once had, they have been placated with what they are being fed, their minds too full of all that society pumps into their lives for them to properly think. Despite this crippling of their abilities, Bloom realizes that they might well be happiest this way. This description becomes applicable to all of the people that Bloom encounters in Dublin: they might be happy in their mindlessness, but the noises that they make is still aggravating to Bloom.

A further connection is made between the lotus eaters and the people of Dublin when Bloom begins to consider the church. This begins when Bloom is contemplating where he might meet Martha: "Could meet one Sunday after the rosary. Thank your : not having any. Usual love scrimmage. Then running round corners. Bad as a row with Molly. Cigar has a cooling effect. Narcotic" (*Ulysses*, 75). The practice of the church on which Bloom first focuses says a lot in itself. The very name of the practice, the rosary, recalls the intoxicating flowers that blind the islanders to the things about which they care. Bloom goes on to consider the church in terms that even more strongly evokes this theme while he is watching people taking communion: "The next one. Shut your eyes and open your mouth. What? *Corpus*. Body. Corpse. Good idea the Latin. Stupefies them first. Hospice for the dying. They don't seem to chew it : only swallow it down" (*Ulysses*, 77). Bloom sees that the church is especially strong in its effect because it takes away from the people their ability to truly consider what it is they are being given. The mysticism of the tradition stupefies those that partake in it,

and they simply swallow whatever is fed to them without question; they do not “chew it over” or give it any kind of critical consideration.

Bloom also considers one of the most popular lotus flowers in Dublin, alcohol. He envisions alcohol in a way that unquestionably links it to the theme of the lotus eaters:

Lord Iveagh once cashed a sevenfigure cheque for a million in the bank of Ireland. Shows you the money to be made out of porter . . . Barrels bumped in his head : dull porter slopped and churned inside. the bungholes sprang open and a huge dull flood leaked out, flowing together, winding through mudflats all over the level land, a lazy pooling swirl of liquor bearing along wideleaved flowers of its froth (*Ulysses*, 76).

The “flowery” language creates a direct relation between the consideration of porter and the lotuses that cause the intoxication of the people of the island on which Odysseus is nearly trapped. The intoxication that alcohol provides leads to a loss of mindfulness and a loss of care about the issues on which the people of Dublin should be focusing their attentions. Not only this, but the continual purchasing of alcohol drains them of their funds. Thus, alcohol does two jobs in one: it keeps the people of Dublin from being able to properly formulate thought about the issues that plague them and it keeps them in relative poverty, keeping their dependence upon things like alcohol at a high level. It keeps the people in a vicious cycle.

We see in this episode that Bloom maintains a position both partially immersed in society and removed enough from it to properly see all that is happening within it. Bloom is able to formulate ideas about what is taking place in the lives of the people

around him by virtue of his liminality. This episode shows us the importance of being properly removed from society in order to avoid falling into the monotony of everyday life—to avoid being intoxicated by the lotuses of modern society.

## Aeolus

The Aeolus episode warns against the dangers of art and the artist being too close to the subject of the art. The episode deals with the art of the newspaper and journalism in order to show this. We see that the newspaper and the art-form that it stands for falls into the issues that arise out of a lack of removal from its subjects and inspirations.

First, we see the incest prevalent in Aeolus's court in *The Odyssey* exhibited in the newspaper for which Bloom works: "Mr Bloom turned and saw the liveried porter raise his lettered cap as a stately figure entered between the newsboards of the *Weekly Freeman and National Press* and the *Freeman's Journal and National Press*" (*Ulysses*, 113). We see that the news-boards and offices of the different newspapers are all within direct proximity of one another as Bloom makes his way back and forth between the different offices. The papers directly borrow back and forth from one another, as is evidenced by the constant calling for copies of specific papers throughout the episode: "What did Ignatius Gallaher do? I'll tell you. Inspiration of genius. Cabled right away. Have you *Weekly Freeman* of 17 March? Right. Have you got that?" (*Ulysses*, 131). This direct back and forth, this intellectual incestuousness, eventually leads to a practice

in which there is no room for true artistic inspiration. Original notions die out, and a stagnant pool of ideas and words become the norm for the practice.

The idea is raised in the episode, however, that this incestuous practice is fitting for the age for which it is working: “Ignatius Gallaher we all know and his Chapelizod boss, Harmsworth of the farthing press, and his American cousin of the Bowery gutter sheet not to mention *Paddy Kelly’s Budget*, *Pue’s Occurrences* and our watchful friend the *The Skibereen Eagle* . . . Sufficient for the day is the newspaper thereof” (*Ulysses*, 133). It seems to be implied that the newspaper being printed is representative of the culture of the time period. The society that *Ulysses* is capturing is one in which people are trapped in an incestuous whirlpool of stagnant ideas, each person unable to add new or meaningful ideas to the cultural thought. As Professor MacHugh states, “Success for us is the death of the intellect and of the imagination” (*Ulysses*, 129). The newspaper is a machination used to maintain this practice of incest.

Even literature falls into this trap in the modern age. Bits and pieces of works of literature are pastiched, used, and reused until they lose all of the meaning that they may have once had. This is evidenced in the bits and pieces of poems and lyrics that arise unexpected throughout the episode, “*‘Twas rank and fame that tempted thee, / ‘Twas empire charmed thy heart*” (*Ulysses*, 126); “*On swift sail flaming / From storm and south / He comes, pale vampire, / Mouth to my mouth*” (*Ulysses*, 127); “. . . . . *la tua pace / . . . . . che parlar ti piace / . . . . mentre che il vento, come fa, si tace*” (*Ulysses*, 133). These snippets of verse are pulled out of their proper context—and, in the case of the bit from Dante, even missing parts of the lines that are pulled—in such a way as to rob them of the meaning that they once held. This theme is most powerfully

indicated, though, in the outlandish use of specific literary styles without any evident reasoning: “Messenger took out his match box thoughtfully and lit his cigar. I have often thought since on looking back over that strange time that it was that small act, trivial in itself, that striking of that match, that determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives” (*Ulysses*, 134). This sentence, obviously Dickensian in its style, succeeds only, if it succeeds in anything, in causing confusion; it is not even possible to ascertain whose sentence it is meant to be. This is evidence of the incestuous pastiche of literature and literary styles prevalent in the art of modern society. Through this, these literary forms are left ineffective, uninspired, and stagnant.

Bloom, however, is gone throughout all of this, and so it seems that, like his counterpart Odysseus, he is able to escape from this stagnant pool of incest. His “gentle art” is not caught up in the court of Aeolus because he is able to properly remove himself from it, whereas Stephen, trapped in the court, has his work, *The Parable of the Plums*, pulled apart and interspersed with the intellectual incest of the newspapermen. Bloom exhibits the escapism proper for an artist, but Stephen is too caught up in the subject of his art to create effectively.

### **Scylla and Charybdis**

In the Scylla and Charybdis episode we see another instance of the importance of the artist’s liminality. We see battled over in this episode the choice between Scylla’s

rock, Dogma, and Charybdis's whirlpool, Mysticism. Throughout, different figures and idea systems come to represent the two sides of this choice.

We see the side of mysticism laid out by Russel in the beginnings of the argument: "Art has to reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences. The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring. The painting of Gustave Moreau is the painting of ideas. The deepest poetry of Shelley, the words of Hamlet bring our mind into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas" (*Ulysses*, 177). Mysticism is based in the ideas of the spiritual, such as Plato's philosophy about the forms. *Feeling* is the important thing; the mystic's side of the argument finds the scientific factualness of the concrete, "real" life uninspiring—unworthy of the production of art. There are certain issues with mysticism, however ("The peatsmoke is going to his head"), as the mystic, caught up entirely in the world of ideas and completely separated from the world of the concrete (like Arghol), might well find his art ineffective because of his lack of connection with the true world, which is his subject. This is evidenced in the argument about Ann Hathaway between John Eglinton and Stephen: "Her ghost has been laid for ever. She died, for literature at least, before she was born.' 'She died, Stephen retorted, sixty seven years after she was born. She saw him into and out of the world. She took his first embraces. She bore his children and she laid pennies on his eyes to keep his eyelids closed when he lay on his deathbed'" (*Ulysses*, 182). The mystic's downfall lies in his inherent tendency to overlook the real. There are things that matter outside the realm of ideas. On the side of mysticism, the artist runs the risk of becoming "formless," unable to effect the subject of his art because of his absurd distance from it.

The side of dogma we see laid out by Stephen, in his thoughts against the assertions of Russel: “Unsheathe your dagger definitions. Horseness is the whatness of allhorse. Streams of tendency and eons they worship. God : noise in the street : very peripatetic. Space : what you damn well have to see . . . Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past” (*Ulysses*, 178). Dogma is based in the concrete, such as Aristotle’s theory of substance. It is based in the idea that abstractions have no existence outside the particular, concrete things that they inhere; the dogmatist’s side of the argument finds the abstraction of the mystic “improbable, insignificant and undramatic”—too shallow for the creation of art (*Ulysses*, 178). Of course there are issues with dogma as well, as the dogmatist, so immersed in the “real,” concrete happenings of the world will not be able to create art that can succeed in anything but retelling real events: “Maybe . . . he had a midwife to mother as he had a shrew to wife. But she, the giglot wanton, did not break a bedvow. Two deeds are rank in that ghost’s mind : a broken vow and the dullbrained yokel on whom her favour has declined, deceased husband’s brother. Sweet Ann I take it, was hot in the blood. Once a wooer twice a wooer” (*Ulysses*, 194). The dogmatist runs the risk, like Stephen does here, of losing the ability to truly create anything with its own meaning. On the side of dogma, the artist can fall into the trap of becoming so preoccupied with “real” happenings that he is unable to create truly effective art.

The true artist, the effective artist, must be caught by neither the whirlpool of mysticism nor the rock of dogma. This is represented in the argument through the figure of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is able to embody bits of both sides without being caught by the traps that they each present. He is able to pull from the real and the

concrete but also pull from the abstract: “To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever” (*Ulysses*, 181). This is what the true artist must be able to accomplish. He must encompass both “I, I and I. I.,” both the continuity of memory and the discontinuity of the ever-changing forms, he must be a “myriadminded man” (*Ulysses*, 182,197).

In this episode we see an interesting instance of Joyce’s Odysseus doing what Homer’s did not or could not. Whereas Homer’s Odysseus chooses Scylla (and loses six men to her), Joyce’s Odysseus, Bloom, bypasses both Scylla (dogma) and Charybdis (mysticism) by avoiding the argument all together. This places Bloom in the conception of the true artist, caught by neither dogma nor mysticism. A clue implying Bloom’s place in this conception can be found elsewhere in the episode, when Stephen is considering Bloom’s race, the Jews: “Jews, whom christians tax with avarice, are of all races the most given to intermarriage” (*Ulysses*, 197). Bloom, as the artist, is given to the intermarriage of mysticism and dogma. He is removed enough from society to critique it, but involved in society enough to understand it.

### **Cyclops**

The Cyclops episode warns against the nearsightedness and one-mindedness that can result from blindly following movements like nationalism. The episode deals with this theme through an examination of fenianism, a radical form of Irish nationalism.

The strictly fenian worldview comes to represent Polyphemus in the episode, single-sighted to the point of blindness.

The issues of blindly following movements like fenianism is shown within the episode through the excessive and exaggerated portrayals of all things related to Irish nationalism, even professing the greatness of Ireland through things which do not belong to it. For example, this is the description given by the nameless narrator of the episode of a man having a drink in the small pub:

Terence O’Ryan heard him and straightway brought him a crystal cup full of the foaming ebon ale which the noble twin brothers Bungiveagh and Bungardilaun brew ever in their divine alevats, cuning as the sons of the deathless Leda. For they garner the succulent berries of the hop and mass and sift and bruise and brew them and they mix therewith sour juices and bring the must to the sacred fire and cease not night or day from their toil, those cunning brothers, lords of the vat (*Ulysses*, 287).

All of this praise and flowery language is used in order to say what could be said in the simple sentence, “Terence O’Ryan bought a pint of Guinness.” Exaggerations of this kind show the single-sightedness and blindness inherent in a system like fenianism. Like Polyphemus, systems of this kind lack the ability to see things in depth. The citizen embodies this in his blindness toward the irony of the arguments that he makes: “[The English are] not European, says the citizen. I was in Europe with Kevin Egan of Paris. You wouldn’t see a trace of them or their language anywhere in Europe except in a *cabinet d’aisance*” (*Ulysses*, 311). In his eagerness to down the English culture, the citizen fails to realize that *he* is using “their” language.

Bloom, however, in his role as Odysseus, does not fall prey to the pitfalls of blindly following a group or system. He is able to see things in depth; he is far-sighted: “Some people, says Bloom, can see the mote in others’ eyes but they can’t see the beam in their own” (*Ulysses*, 312). Bloom sees the one-sidedness of the fenian viewpoint for what it is: detrimental to a properly formed intellect. He is the only dissenting voice in the episode; he is far enough removed from systems like fenianism in order not to be harmed by their blinding influence.

### **Circe**

In the Circe episode we see the text of *Ulysses* recirculating itself. Characters, ideas, and items from throughout the novel find their way into this episode, reworked into the hallucinatory setting of night-town. All that has been internalized throughout the novel, by both reader and characters, becomes externalized once again.

What is important in this episode is the distinction between the hallucinations or externalizations of Bloom versus those of the other characters, specifically Stephen. We see that Bloom’s externalizations are just that—external—they actually effect the situation at hand, all of the surrounding characters and items brought into and effected by them. This is evidenced in the situation after Zoe tells Bloom, “Go on. Make a stump speech out of it,” when Bloom discredits smoking. After Zoe says this, Bloom takes on the manner and outfit of a politician, performing an actual stump speech of sorts:

Mankind is incorrigible. Sir Walter Raleigh Brought from the new world that potato and that weed, the one a killer of pestilence by absorption, the other a poisoner of the ear, eye, heart, memory, will, understanding, all. That is to say, he brought the poison a hundred years before another person whose name I forget brought the food. Suicide. Lies. All our habits. Why, look at our public life! (*Ulysses*, 452).

Not only does Bloom assume the appropriate style and manner for the situation at hand, he brings into use, through his externalization, many objects, figures, and characters from earlier episodes to add greater effect. Among these are the Chimes ("Turn again, Leopold! Lord mayor of Dublin!"), Late Lord Mayor Harrington, Councillor Lorcan Sherlock, John Howard Parnell, Tom Kernan, John Wyse Nolan, and others. We see that Bloom is able to draw upon ideas and materials that he has picked up through his participation in society in order to create something new in order to better effect the situation.

In Stephen's externalizations, however, we see something quite different. Stephen does not effect the situation or any of the other characters through his externalizations; his actually only succeed in folding back in on him. In this way, Stephen's externalizations are, in reality, more like internalizations. All of his projections are inward facing. This is most clearly evidenced in Stephen's repeated visions of his mother's ghost throughout the episode. Unlike Bloom's projections, none of the other characters can see Stephen's mother when this happens, but it effects him terribly: "The Mother : (*Wrings her hands slowly, moaning desperately.*) O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on him! Save him from hell, O divine Sacred Heart!' 'Stephen : No!

No! No! Break my spirit all of you if you can! I'll bring you all to heel!" (*Ulysses*, 541).

The significance of what Stephen's mother says is important in this understanding. The prayer that she is saying for Stephen is most often spoken by the devout for themselves. We see that on yet another level Stephen's projections are inward: he is unable to effect the situation through his externalizations.

The Circe episode provides us with a final bit of evidence that Bloom is truly the artist figure in *Ulysses*, not Stephen. Through his partial immersion in society and simultaneous distance from it, Bloom is able to gather the appropriate materials but also have the necessary perspective to properly critique and effect his subject. In this way, Bloom is the ideal representation of the artist as a liminal figure—as the balanced escapist—both removed from his subject and partially engaged with it.

## Concluding Remarks:

We can see through these three works that the figure of the artist is a complex one. Though *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* shows us that the development of the artist is, in itself, an act of escape—and that the artist learns that in order to make his art (and make effective art) he must be removed from his subject (in many cases, his society)—*Enemy of the Stars* shows that if the artist removes himself too entirely from his subject, he will become too detached from it to in any way effect it, and he will lose the ability to effect any forces outside of himself. These at first seemingly conflicting views leave us at a loss when trying to understand how escapism applies to the figure of the artist.

*Ulysses*, though, through its stylistic elements, and specifically through the figure of Leopold Bloom, shows how the artist is to successfully appropriate escapism in order to create effective art. Bloom is both removed from society and partially immersed in it. He is a liminal figure, able to distance himself from what is going on in his surroundings in order to see “the bigger picture” and understand how to critique it, but also able to function in society so that he understands how it works and why it functions the way that it does.

It seems, then, that we have in part discovered why Faulkner left Mississippi to write about it; why Fitzgerald left New York in order to imagine it; why Joyce left Dublin to capture and critique it in his work; why Lewis separated himself from society in order to attack it. We can also see through the works studied how this tendency of the artist can best be utilized to make his art effective. Ultimately, the takeaway that we get from

the analyses of these works for their escapist tendencies is that the artist must be the mixed type—removed but immersed. He must partially immerse himself in that which is his subject—in this case his society—in order to understand the inner-workings of his subject gather the materials that he is to synthesize into his art. On the other hand, he must remain well enough removed so that he can see from a vantage point uncommon to others. He must be able to see his subject for its whole, so that he may properly critique it in his art. The artist, then, at his height, assumes the place of the mixed-escapist—immersed so that he may capture, removed so that he may understand and critique.

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